

UNITED WAY OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY 2021 COMMUNITY INITIATIVES REPORT

COMMUNITY IMPACT:

In March, the United Way Board of Directors approved grants totaling almost \$282,500, to support 15 health and human service programs. There were 16 grant requests received.

The “Live United” Mini Grant Initiative was started in 2015. In 2021, \$34,500 was allocated for these grants which are awarded to smaller non-partner 501c3 nonprofits who give services to Gloucester County residents. There is a funding maximum of \$1,500 for the one-year grants. The 16 recipients of the funding in 2021 were: Emmanuel Cancer Foundation; Shadow Equestrian, Inc.; People for People Foundation; GW Cooperative Ministries, Inc; Renaissance Village Youth Center; The Lighthouse Community Center; SE4SK Special Events for Special Kids; Volunteer Center of South Jersey; South Jersey Robotics; Viola’s Place Inc.; Boys & Girls Clubs of Gloucester County; Newfield Terrace Community Action Organization; Clarifi / CCCS of Delaware Valley; Partners in Learning, Inc.; South Jersey Dream Center; BookSmiles. There were 13 organization supported through this program in 2020, awarded \$18,400.

Lastly, the Board of Directors approved a \$1,500 Innovation Grant, for the “Cooking Matters at Home” program offered through the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Gloucester County, Family & Community Health Sciences (FCHS). This pilot program helps families by providing food, planning and preparation instructions to help those affected by the COVID pandemic create quick, family-friendly, low-cost meals that are healthy and nutritious.

COVID-19 RESPONSE & RECOVERY FUND:

Since its inception in 2020 the United Way of Gloucester County’s COVID-19 Response & Recovery Fund has raised over \$50,000 and supported more than 40 local nonprofit programs. This includes the \$10,000 raised from our May 2020 Telethon. These funds have been distributed through 3 funding opportunities: Phase 1, Micro-Grants; Phase 2, Direct Program Support; and Phase 3, Program Recovery.

Phase 1 - Micro-Grant Funding

“Live Healthy” Micro Grants that will focus on preventative measures to battle the spread of COVID-19. The purpose of the micro-grants is to help non-profit agencies meet the increasing demand for supplies such as wipes, soap, thermometers, and other prevention materials that will keep the community members safe. At this time (4/2020 – 8/2021), over 35 agencies have been funded at \$200 to direct community programs for prevention efforts.

Phase 2 – Direct Program Support

At the approval of the Board, \$14,000 was allocated to 7 agencies, at \$2,000 each in June 2020. These agencies were:

- Clarifi – Gloucester County Financial Counseling (virtual session for individuals and families)
- Center for Family Services – SERV Program (Domestic Violence Services)
- Acenda Integrated Health – Mental Health Counseling (adults and children, uninsured or under insured)
- People for People – Direct Assistance Program (funding for small grants, i.e. utility, rent, etc.)
- Greater Woodbury Cooperative Ministries (Woodbury) – Food pantry
- Healing Wings Pentecostal Temple of Glassboro Inc. (Glassboro) – Food pantry
- Apostles Lutheran Church, Blackhorse Pike (Washington Twp.) – Food pantry

Phase 3 –Program Recovery

In September 2020, the Board approved the distribution of \$1,000 to 20 nonprofit organizations to be used for program recovery by these local nonprofit organizations. These funds were used to allow some organizations to transition their programs and services, when possible, to a virtual or digital platform. Others used these funds for plexiglass partitions; installation of hand sanitation stations and/or temperature screening equipment. Thank to these funds, nonprofit agencies were able to provide critically needed services in-person or virtually.

PROGRAMS:

Women United

Women United is a national program of United Way Worldwide. Organized in 2008, the local Women United was created to provide women in Gloucester County with the opportunity to assist others in reaching their fullest potential and empowering women of all ages. Since its inception, this Program has funded 35 various grants for almost \$90,000. Some of these grants include: financial literacy workshops, life-skills training, college scholarships for courses and textbooks, leadership and anti-bullying skills for school-age girls, along with workshops on various colleges and career paths including STEM, tutor training to assist in literacy, books for infants of new parents to instill reading at an early age, computers for girls and boys at a center, Born Learning Trails, which are interactive learning trails designed to boost school readiness in preschool children and other funding areas. Women United members continue to discuss and bring additional trails to additional communities throughout the county.

Collections are held at some of the fundraising and networking events to assist various programs in the County. Donated items have been: professional wardrobe items and business shoes for women for interviews and reentering the work force, women's personal care products, holiday gifts and books for children, and a food drive.

Each year, the members help the local agency, Mothers Matter, to assemble color-coded, very full gift bags for Mother's Day that are distributed to Mothers in hospitals, agency clients, those in the military and going through serious health issues.

NJ211

The United Way provides funds for Gloucester County's participation in NJ211, the 24/7 statewide information and referral service. The service helps individuals to identify and connect with providers for needed assistance. From January 2020 through August 2021, NJ 2-1-1 handled 26,981 inquiries for information and assistance from Gloucester county residents. The top needs from these calls were: utilities assistance (30%), housing & shelter (27%) and healthcare & COVID (12%). The top three municipalities contacting NJ 211 are Williamstown, Woodbury and Glassboro. During this time there were over 3,000 calls specifically related to COVID-19. NJ 2-1-1 is always open and offers live assistance via phone, text (your zip code to 898-211), chat or email. In addition, a searchable database of services is available online at www.nj211.org.

NJ 211 also operates as the State's Homeless Hotline and the State's Home Energy Assistance Hotline.

REQUESTED GRANTS FROM FOUNDATIONS:

AARP Tax Aid

This is a tax assistance program for low, moderate and fixed income households. United Way was instrumental in obtaining multiple grants enabling the program to purchase laptops, printers and

additional equipment for all seven of the AARP sites, which file online. The average adjusted gross income of our clients in 2020 was \$37,004 and over 65% of our clients are over the age of 60 in Gloucester County.

As a result of COVID-19, AARP had to switch to a drop-off tax preparation model with limited in-person contact between the tax preparer and clients. Of the 7 sites, 3 locations opened as drop off/pickup centers: United Way, Monroe Twp. Library and Washington Twp.

AARP volunteers are at the UWGC office site three days a week from early February through the deadline of April 15th. For the 2020 tax filing year, in Gloucester County, a total of 934 clients, of which 348 clients were serviced through the United Way of Gloucester County site. Clients from Gloucester County were served in filing federal and state returns, \$1,202,398 was received in total refunds and \$479,566 from UWGC clients. This service saved households an estimated \$142,500 in filing fees across the county and \$52,200 just for participants from United Way of Gloucester County site. Since the inception of the program in 2009, the initiative has saved County residents over \$4,027,450 in filing fees.

DRIVES:

Gloucester County Cares About Hunger Food Drive

The 16th annual food drive was held in March and it was a huge success with 6,609 pounds of food collected and over \$8,000 donated. This year, more than 35 organizations participated. The Food Bank of South Jersey converted the poundage and donations into the number of meals served...this collection provided 29,749 meals, almost the meals raised in 2020. Since the drive started in 2006, 226,867 pounds of food have been donated. This event was co-sponsored by the United Way of Gloucester County, the Gloucester County Human Service Advisory Council and the People for People Foundation.

Also, several hundred pounds of pet food was collected and given to a Gloucester County Animal Shelter to be used to feed shelter animals in Gloucester County.

Toys for Tots

Last year's annual toy collection, through United Way, had 44 organizations participate and we provided a virtual giving option, by working with a distributor for individuals looking to purchase toy bundles and have them shipped directly to the Gloucester County site. In 2020, Toys for Tots distributed 171,752 toys and assisted over 35,000 children and increase over 8,000 more children than in 2019. These new, unwrapped toys, books and educational toys were distributed to children throughout the County, to individual families and through area churches, schools and children's organizations. The drive was operated again by the Semper Fidelis Detachment of the Marine Corps League.

Coat Drive

HFM partners with Heart of South Jersey, which distributes the donated coats to more than 20 nonprofit organizations. The Y.A.L.E school of Cherry Hill provides volunteers to help count, sort and deliver coats throughout the drive. These organizations help get the coats into the hands of veterans, children, families and the homeless. Traditionally, United Way of Gloucester County has participated as a drop-off location for the Gloucester County Coat Drive which collected more than 21,000 coats since its beginning in 2010. *However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic there was no drive in either 2020 or 2021.*

Back Pack Collection

United Way of Gloucester County partners with the Center for Family Services for their Operation Backpack program. Backpacks and boxes full of needed school supplies are collected from individuals and companies. The backpacks and supplies are distributed to children and teens of local families in need in Gloucester County. These items give children a good start for their school year. In the past this drive collects and distributes more than 1,500 backpacks and hundreds of other much-needed items to students in need. *As a result of COVID-19 protocols, donors were asked to make a monetary contribution (instead of collecting supplies) online through Center for Family Services to purchase these needed backpacks and school supplies.*

INITIATIVES:

FamilyWize / SingleCare

This national program is a free prescription savings card that is used by uninsured and underinsured individuals and families to receive a discount in the high cost of prescription medications. The goal is to have everyone receive the medicines that they need at a reduced cost. There is no paperwork to complete, no individual information is given and no financial or residential requirements are needed. The savings card is acceptable at all national stores where prescriptions are filled. In the year 2020 Gloucester County residents saved \$134,733.30 and have saved \$86,026.57 in the first 8 months of 2021.

Pureland East-West Community Shuttle

United Way of Gloucester County is working with representatives from the County of Gloucester, Cross County Connection, South Jersey Transportation Authority and Heart of South Jersey, with the financial support from the Pascale Sykes Foundation for the Pureland East-West Community Shuttle. This shuttle provides low cost, easy access transportation along the route 322 corridor to the Pureland Industrial Park, as well as to other needed organizations for access to employment, supportive services, programs, medical, retail, etc. The shuttle connects with ten NJT bus routes. Gloucester County has public transportation running north and south, but there was no options for residents who are dependent on public transportation to go east and west, unless they take multiple transit routes and transfers.

The shuttle started June 1, 2015, runs Monday to Friday for the day shifts, with 11 stops starting at the Avandale Park & Ride, through Williamstown, Glassboro, Mullica Hill, Swedesboro and end at the Pureland Industrial Park. A stop at the new Inspira Medical Complex, in Mullica Hill, began in November of 2019. There is also an internal shuttle throughout the Industrial Park to take the employees to their specific worksite. The cost of the regular shuttle is \$1.00 each way and the internal shuttle is free.

For the full years of 2016, the total ridership was 27,747; for 2017, the total ridership was 40,025; for 2018, the total ridership was 46,854; 2019, the total ridership was 54,903; and for 2020, ridership was 43,583. As of August 2021, there have been 22,282 riders on the shuttle this year. The total ridership since inception is 243,882.

Born Learning Trail

The Born Learning Trail is an interactive trail designed to boost school readiness in preschool children through a series of 10 engaging activities, resulting in increased language, reading and problem-solving skills.

As of now, there are six trails installed in Gloucester County – the Autumn Pasquale Memorial Park in Clayton, the Wing-Dickerson Park in Woodbury, the William Wilt complex in Mullica Hill, the West Deptford Park in West Deptford, in Swedesboro at Swedesboro Lake Park near Lake Narraticon and in Woolwich Township at Locke Avenue Park.

9/29/2021